

MYSTERY LOSSIEMOUTH TRAGEDY Seiner and five crew lost

THE LOSSIEMOUTH fishing fleet was staying in port this week as a mark of respect to the five crewmen who went missing on Sunday in the 60ft. seiner *Sapphire*. All hope for the men has disappeared and the search called off.

Conservative Party leader Margaret Thatcher, who was due to visit the port on Friday, has cancelled her visit on hearing of the tragedy.

Sapphire (UL 194) disappeared while en route from Lochinver to her home port of Lossiemouth via the Pentland Firth.

A full-scale search was called off on Sunday after divers located her engine and winch off the rocky headland near Stoer Point.

The divers were taken to this spot on board the fishing vessel *Scotia* after searchers

had spotted wreckage — a battered liferaft and a lifebelt marked *Sapphire*. No bodies were found.

The tragedy only began to be realised after a 48-hour silence. She had left Lochinver at 2 a.m. on Thursday morning last week.

It was only after Skipper James McLeod (36) failed to arrive home to keep a wedding anniversary date with his wife that the full implication of the silence began to be seen.

A search was then organised involving Lochinver life boat, and RAF Nimrod, British Airways helicopters, Lochinver Auxiliary Coast Rescue Company and a

local crew and boat who the seine netter *Sangha* went down off the Abster coast.

Immediate financial help for relatives of the lost will be taken care of by a trust fund which fishermen Lossiemouth have been contributing to for over 10 years. Through their Association, fishermen have been paying money into the fund under a levy system.

His wife thought he had been delayed by the winch trouble. Many theories were being put forward as to what happened to the vessel, one of Lossiemouth's top skippers who knows the area *Sapphire* was in said he is convinced she had been driven onto the rocks.

Skipper John Thomson of *Horizon* pointed out that from the location of the wreckage he did not think *Sapphire* could have been overwhelmed by a sea.

"One mile beyond Stoer Point — I don't think he could have been fishing, so I don't think he would have been overcome out at sea."

Skipper Thomson was also

sure that *Sapphire* had been lost before daylight on Thursday. "We sailed from Lochinver at 8 o'clock on Thursday night — 18 hours after *Sapphire*," he added.

Other crew members lost were: Raymond Bruce (36), George Thomson (58), Jimmie Gault (55), all of Lossiemouth, and 21-year-old Robert Craig, of Elgin, whose wife is expecting their first baby.

The sixth member of the crew, William McLeod (29), had been off work for seven weeks with a shoulder injury and had failed to persuade his doctor to allow him to rejoin his crew mates on Wednesday before *Sapphire* left on her fateful voyage.

The tragedy may have come to light sooner if there had not been some confusion over Skipper McLeod's intentions. There was a fault in the winch gear on *Sapphire* and it was not known whether Skipper McLeod was going to attempt fishing before taking the vessel through the Minch round the north coast of Scotland and through the Pentland Firth back to Lossiemouth for repairs.

He brought BUT's giant sidewinder *Ross Revenge* home from a 25-day Bear Island trip with 2,126 kits which sold for £77,449.

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grossing by a local trawler at Grimsby, although the Icelandic stern dragger *Ogri's*

little port of 6,000 people now finds itself bound tightly together in grief. It was 20 years ago when the port was mourning the loss of

fishermen, fisherman had been paying money into the fund under a levy system.

THE GOVERNMENT'S clamp-down on industrial fishing for mackerel has upset the UK's biggest fish meal buyers.

Managing director of the Hull Fish Meal and Oil Co. Ltd. Matt Anderson, said this week that he was still expecting to get supplies from the South West — a region from which he bought 25,000 tons last winter at about £260 a ton.

The ship is taking on equipment for a processing factory being in connection with the Australian venture. At the processing plant is a Baader machinery and freezing equipment.

"The crew are still waiting to sail and we hope the *Ogri's* will be away at the weekend," said the spokesman.

A BUT spokesman then told *Fishing News* "There is

still a further delay in the preparations but we are still awaiting her fish."

Mr. Anderson said the country imported between 250,000 and 300,000 tons of fish-meal a year at between £280 and £320 a ton.

Any contributions from the home fleet helped keep down this part of our import bill.

MAFF spokesman said

that all the points raised were sure to be considered at the time of the review of the Protection Order on October 31, when catchers' and consumers' views would be examined.

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"Out of every catch landed, there is a proportion which is not fit for human consumption. The industry's buyers on the quayside are the ones who will decide what they want. If the catch isn't fit to eat I think it will go for meal rather than be dumped back at sea."

Mr. Anderson said he did not think the Mackerel Protection Order, 1977, had

any teeth at all. He added that he was not in favour of fishing directly for meal, and was sensitive of the image people had today about fish-meal.

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COMMENT

THE FORECAST by the White Fish Authority that imports of cod could soar by over £40 million this year will, if proved right, be the most tangible evidence so far of the erosion of British fishing operations by limit extensions.

Shortly, this demersal fish crisis is expected to take another turn for the worse with the anticipated closure of the north-east Arctic grounds to British trawlers. As a last hope the eyes of Humberside owners will now be even more firmly fixed on the grounds to the west of Britain where the seasonal blue whiting fishery takes place.

The snag with blue whiting is that no one is yet one hundred per cent sure of its acceptability on the food market. From a report to be published in *Fishing News* next week, it seems the White Fish Authority is optimistic about the processing and acceptability trials it is carrying out with blue whiting.

In the end, however, it will be the major frozen food firms who decide whether we are in business with blue whiting. For some time now, both Findus and Birds Eye have had blue whiting processing lines at work in their factories. So far they have been reluctant to reveal what progress has been made.

Time is now running out for the distant water fleet and this coyness on the part of the frozen food firms could prove costly. Trawler owners will want to know whether it's worth keeping trawlers operational through the Winter to get at the blue whiting in the Spring.

THIS WEEK the thoughts of the British fishing industry go out to the port of Lossiemouth which is mourning the loss of five fishermen in the *Sapphire* tragedy. While there is a new air of prosperity in some of our inshore ports, it is worth reflecting on the price that sometimes has to be paid for it.

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£77,449 RECORD FOR 'REVENGE'

TOP DISTANT water trawler skipper Johnny Meadows smashed the Grimsby port grossing record last

national grossing record of £98,540 — established on November 1976 — was never in danger.

Skipper Meadows is making a habit of pulling off record trips when distant water fishing is generally recognised as being below its best.

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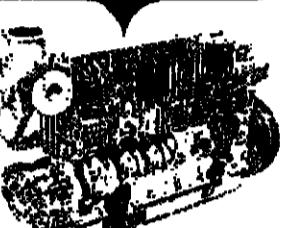
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FISHING NEWS

great detail. They cover practically all EEC waters.

One produced to a scale of 0.12 inches to a mile covering coastal waters between the Humber and Orkney might help you.

Eventually the chart which will be of most help to you will be one which you have inscribed to a considerable extent yourselves. If a Kingfisher 'S' or 'T' series chart does not cover your area, such a chart can be made as follows:

The White Fish Authority's Fisheries Development Officer (Fishing Charts) will supply on request a Kingfisher chart centred on any chosen position.

Within a month or so you will receive one on which are depicted banks, depths, buoys, lightvessels and a few landmarks, and engraved solely with a Decca lattice.

Fishing charts are useful: Kingfisher, Blue Back, and other fisheries charts covering the North Sea and adjacent waters produced by the Admiralty Hydrographic Department together with its Admiralty chart and then begin to add to it daily.

Alternatively you can get a Tartan plotting sheet (D.6871) published by the Admiralty Hydrographic Department, transfer all the necessary information from your Admiralty chart to it and then add your own information.

If you want to fish in an area covered by a Kingfisher 'S' or 'T' series chart, one of these would help.

Although the 'S' series charts were initially produced for seiners working well offshore in the North Sea, many of them now cover coastal areas.

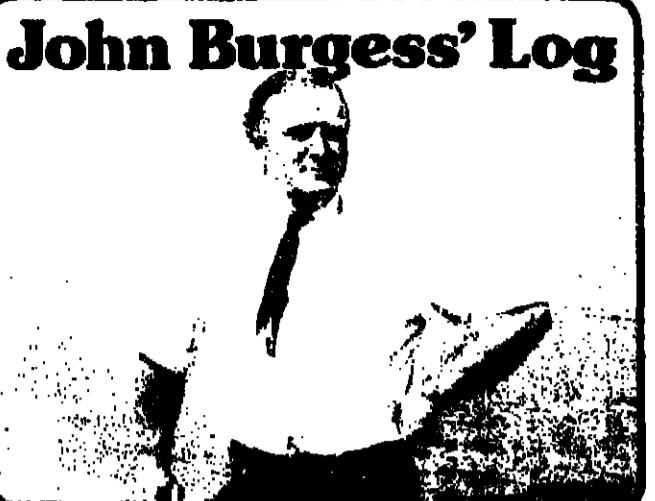
A Tartan plot is a sheet of paper the size of a chart inscribed with a diagram on each side. Each diagram consists of two sets of parallel straight lines intersecting each other at 15, 30, 45, 60, 75 or 90 degrees.

Practice is to use a sheet on which the lines intersect at approximately the same angle as the Decca lattice for their area. They mark the lines with lane numbers at intervals which give them a large scale plot on which to mark fasteners, etc.

Tartan plots and Admiralty Fisheries Charts are obtainable from Kelvin Hughes

ANY QUESTIONS?

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and other Admiralty chart agents.

Blue Back fishing charts are produced by Imray, Laurie, Norie and Wilson at Wych House, Saint Ives, Cambridgeshire.

Kingfisher charts are produced by the White Fish Authority Industrial Development Unit, St. Andrew's Dock, Hull.

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The 'latest' in fishing

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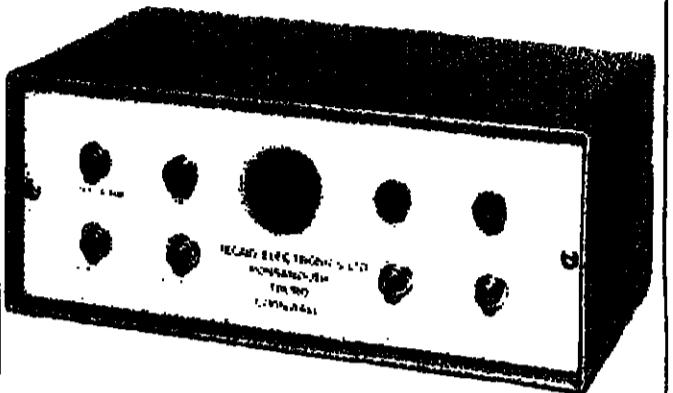
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* Patent Pending.

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RHODELLA

RHODELLA, the latest wooden seiner-trawler from Jones Buckie Shipyard, is fitted with a fishroom chilling plant. The 74-footer has been built for Skipper Eric Smith of Buckie.

She has very attractive lines and was designed by naval architects, G. L. Watson and Co. Her beam is 21ft. 6in. and tonnage under Part IV registry, just under 50.

She is the second *Rhodella* built by Jones for Skipper Smith, the first being a 71ft. cruiser-sterned vessel completed in 1966.

Skipper Smith said that he had chosen a transom stern for the new boat as this gives more room aft both on deck and below. Other skippers have assured him that a transom stern in no way detracts from a vessel's sea keeping abilities.

Rhodella's fishroom chilling plant, supplied by the Aberdeen-based firm of Currie and Thomson (Engineers) Ltd., was installed to stop the ice from melting and, therefore, preserve the quality of the catch, Skipper Smith told *Fishing News*.

Without a chilling plant, he said, a ten-ton supply of ice can melt away well before the end of a five or six day fishing trip.

Rhodella is of traditional Scottish seiner-trawler layout with the deckhouse aft. She is fitted with a full range of gear handling machinery which is now becoming almost standard equipment aboard modern vessels of this type.

A two-drum set of seine rope storage reels from the Lossie Hydraulic Co. are fitted at the after side of the winch and have capacity on each drum for 17 coils of three in. rope. They are fully controlled from the wheelhouse.

D. F. Sutherland and Co. of Lossiemouth supplied the hydraulic combined seine and trawl winch which is fitted well forward, under the shelter of the whaleback.

Its trawl drums are fitted forward of the seine barrels, in an athwartships position, thereby saving deck space. Her Lossie Hydraulics power block is hung on a single

son (Engineers) Ltd., through their Elgin branch. This plant, the manufacturers say, is their most up to date unit and comes very near to what they feel is the ideal chilling equipment for this type of vessel.

Currie and Thomson have been making chilling plants for seine netters since 1969, when Skipper George Cowie of Buckie approached the firm regarding cooling part of the fishroom aboard his wooden vessel the 64 ft. *Aval*.

The installation included a Frigidaire air cooled condensing unit belt driven from a small Petter diesel engine fitted in the engine room, and two treble banked steel coiled evaporators mounted in the fishroom.

Rhodella is the latest vessel to be fitted with a chilling plant from the Aberdeen-based firm of Currie and Thomson.

reach derrick aft of the builders. All the seine rope rollers and guides were made by Fraserburgh Engineering Co. The units have rollers of specially hardened steel and they have been found to last about twice as long as conventional equipment.

Trawl galleys are fitted on both quarters, while a fish washer is fitted under the gutting shelter.

Foremast, landing derrick and fish derrick have been made of aluminium by the Emsworth firm of John Powell.

Skipper Smith said that aluminium helps to keep top weight down and is a good stability feature as was proved on the old *Rhodella*. Her masts and spars were of aluminium.

Steel has been used for the seine derricks and small mizzen mast aboard the new vessel, so as to avoid incompatibility with the steel deckhouse.

Whaleback, gutting shelter and hatch covers are also fabricated from aluminium and, together with the steel deckhouse and other steelwork, were made by the

pump to drive the machinery for fishing. Fitted in the deckhouse are the alarm retrieval, a supplied by the Tec-Aid Electronics Ltd. fire detection and alarm engine.

Propulsion is provided by a Kelvin TBSC8 diesel engine with a continuous rating of 500 bhp at 1,350 rpm to drive the 66in. diameter fixed-pitch propeller through a Reintjes gearbox of 4:1 reduction ratio.

Belt-driven from the fore end of the engine are a 110 V generator and two 24 V generators all of Transmotor manufacture.

The Dowty variable delivery hydraulic pump for the winch is driven from the fore end of the engine through a flexible coupling and a Sutherland step-up gearbox.

A Vickers hydraulic pump mounted on the Sutherland gearbox drives the power block, while another Vickers pump unit belt-driven off the extension shaft at the fore end of the engine provides power for the rope reels.

Power for a 3in. Desmi bilge and general service pump, a Transmotor 110 V generator, a Transmotor 24 V generator, and a hydraulic

lifeline pump to drive the equipment in the wheelhouse and the fishroom.

Electrically driven water indicator; and

includes three Woods emergency lighting

fans and a 2in. decompression

bilge and general service

water pump. Tanks have central Mexico gas cooker for some 3,000 gallons.

Much of the ship's

separate messdeck is

below the wheelhouse.

Reflex oil heater is

in the crew's cabin

deck aft.

Saloon insulated on

head and both

deck with high-density

polythene with timber

Mermaid 23 Watch

Receiver; Woodsen

deck system; and is served by

AP7 Automatic Plot

W. hatch.

Lifecraft radio set.

Other wheelhouse

supply is housed in the

deckhead in

radar; Morse engine

winch controls; Tele

will be mainly

H100 ESG steering

and Petterhead, and will

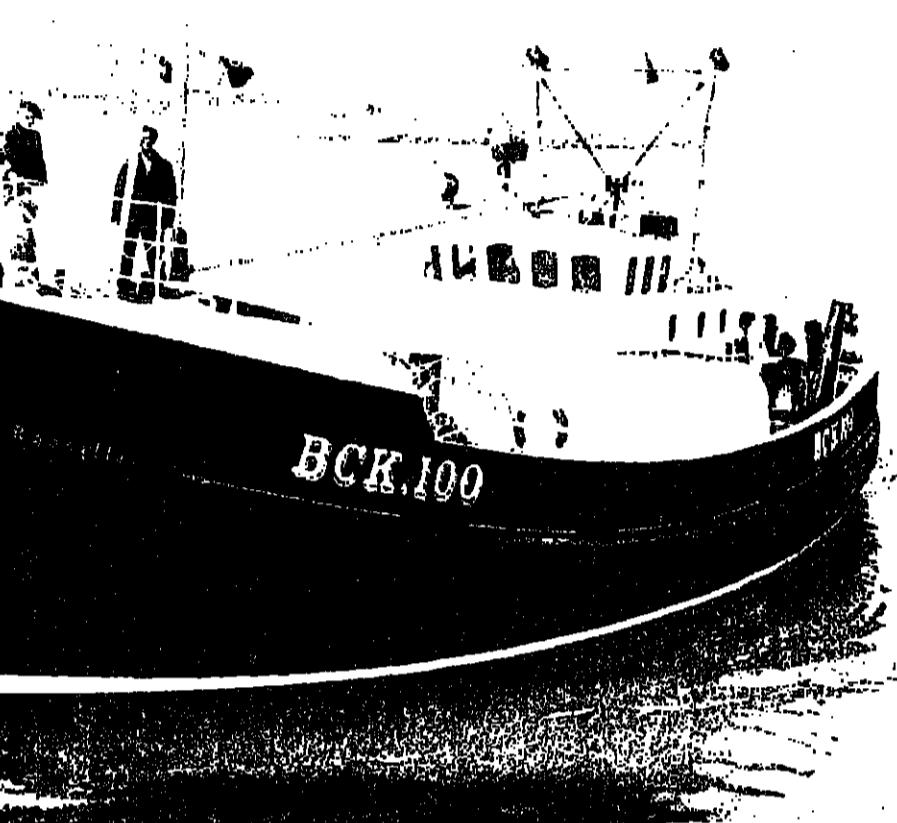
Fiamm horn; Sest

on seine netting,

Duthie and J. and W.

Wynstruments Mk1

type window wiper.

...Cold chill b's
some good

WITH THE need for conservation a major issue in the fishing industry today, fishermen are looking for ways of landing their catches in good condition in order to attract the highest market prices.

As inflation becomes an ever increasing problem they are also looking for ways of cutting down their operating costs.

Chilling plants in the fishrooms of seiner-trawlers have double advantage in that the catch can be held at a temperature of just above freezing point for as long as required, and the ice supply can be prevented from melting away too quickly.

Rhodella is the latest vessel to be fitted with a chilling plant from the Aberdeen-based firm of Currie and Thomson.

Skipper Cowie was impressed with the performance of the plant that he should be an essential part of a fishing vessel's equipment and so he applied for a grant from the White Fish Authority.

Before approving his application, the WFA and the Ministry of Technology's Trawling Research Station evaluated the plant with the object of assessing its economic value in提高 fish quality.

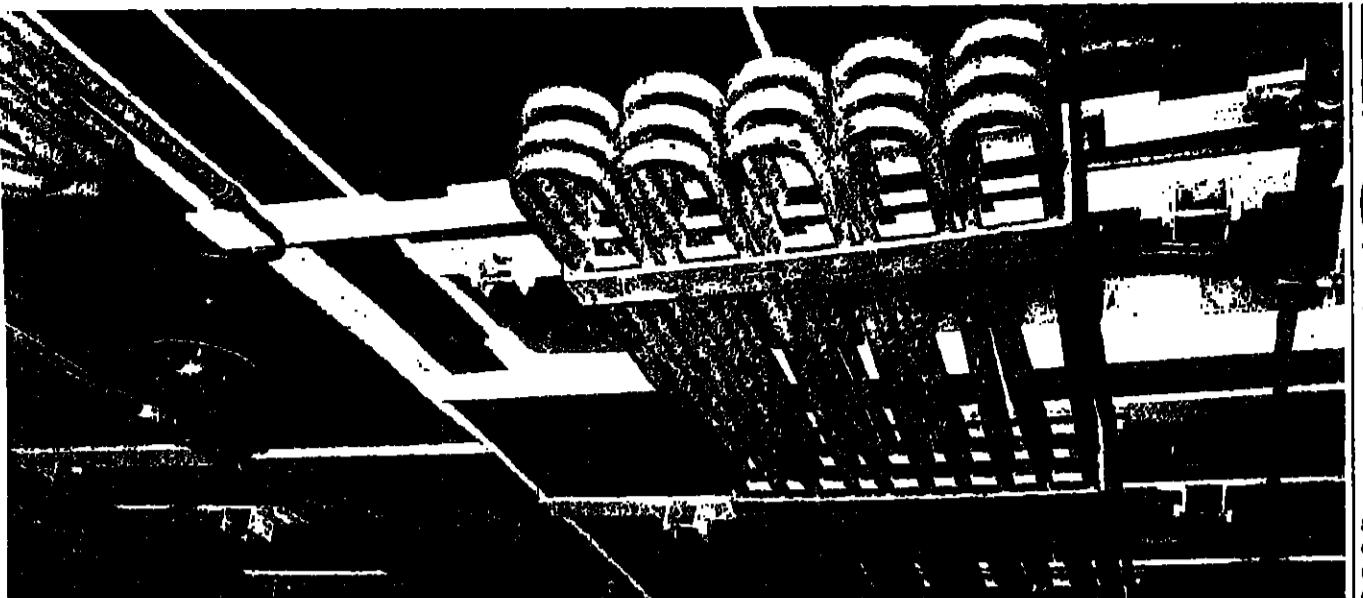
Evaluation was made on two comparative fishing trips, one with *Aval*, one with *Rhodella*, in operation and the other without. Both trips lasted 10 days and the same ground.

Continued on page 29

Photo: G. Watson

Illustration: G. Watson

Photograph: G. Watson



Cold chill
 Continued from p. 8

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Insurance pay-out

THE PLYMOUTH boat *Mam Goz* which suffered fire damage after it crawled up some phosphorous is to be repaired under insurance cover.

The Sunderland Marine Mutual Insurance Co. Ltd. told *Fishing News* that no indication had been given to the owner of the boat, skipper Ted Lawton, that his claim would not be met. The

claim was dealt with promptly say the insurers and the agreed cost of repairs will certainly be met.

The particular policy under which *Mam Goz* is insured does not pay out for loss of earnings or damage to fishing gear. Sunderland pointed out that supplementary cover is available for these cases.

News **Services** **Crash** **Personal Injury**

Irish Sea: atom waste warnings

CERTAIN areas of the Irish Sea could be closed to fishermen because of the increasing output of radioactive caesium.

Fish caught in the Irish Sea and off Western Scotland now contain sufficient caesium to cause significant genetic damage to the general population, warned Professor William T. Windle Potts, professor of biological sciences at the University of Lancaster.

Fishermen who fish off the coast in the neighbourhood of Windscale and who are heavy fish eaters already have at least one third of the maximum allowable dose in their diet alone, say the Ministry of Agriculture.

Skipper Cowie had a plant fitted to his new vessel *Ocean Hunter* built by Macduff Boatbuilding and Engineering Company in 1972, and other installations include the Buckie boats *Aries*, *Conquest*, *Seaforth* and *Roumania*.

Owing to the experience of boatbuilders in installing the equipment, the units have now taken on a much more sophisticated appearance. Today the standard equipment comprises a three hp water-cooled Frigidaire plant with four steel tube evaporators, and a five hp plant feeding six evaporators.

The equipment can be fully automated and is normally worked off the boat's 110V d.c. electric supply and incorporating safety controls with a suitable control/alarm system in the wheelhouse.

Currie and Thomson feel that the most recent installation aboard *Rhodella* could well be an important step towards the ultimate in chilling procedures.

Although the fish to ice ratio aboard *Aval* is 6:1 this is well above the icing practice recommended.

Following a number of surveys carried out by Torry Research Station, a fish to ice ratio of 3:1 is advised for bringing about a significant improvement in fish quality.

However, the traditional boxing methods employed by Scottish seines, make it difficult for them to adhere to this ratio.

If limits set by an independent body were likely to be exceeded at anytime then British Nuclear Fuels Ltd. should have its operations temporarily stopped to restrict the output of radioactive waste, said Professor Potts.

ROBINSON Crusoe should have been saved, not pitted, as the island was shipwrecked on one of the most picturesque and fruitful spots in South America, according to America's Smithsonian Institution.

There are vast resources of shrimps and crabs around Juan Fernandez Island.

ONE of Cornwall's most beautiful areas has been offered to the National Trust.

The move may help local fishermen to win their fight to allow them to land mackerel there during the winter months.

John Vyvyan, of Trelawren, and owner of Tremayne Quay, on the Helford River, made the offer after weeks of controversy following a local planning application by Cadgwith fishermen wishing to use

precedented step of wishing to be kept informed on the situation although no appeal stage has yet been met.

Mr. Vyvyan has sympathies with the fishermen and appreciates their need for a suitable spot to land fish, particularly in view of recent economic rises and increasing unemployment in Cornwall.

Because of the controversy, he has offered the complete project, that is Tremayne Quay, a boat house, a strip of nearby woods and the access roads to the National Trust.

The plan will be discussed at a meeting in October, but sympathies are known to be with the local fishing industry.

Local conservationists claim it would lead to commercialisation of the river. They say it was never intended for fishermen and should not be used as such in the future.

Others claim that fishing, as one of Cornwall's leading industries, should be allowed, and the men who are fishing it increasingly difficult to find a place to land their catch.

It would lead to commercialisation of the river, which is available for these cases.



COCKENZIE, Scotland, fishermen hold their annual holiday Box Meeting. Crowds of fisher-folks from the Firth of Forth join a procession through the streets after local fishermen discuss their year's fishing. Processions halts for dancing and fishermen, wives and sweethearts are dressed in their Sunday best.

GERMAN steam trawler crews find out the secret location of new hake grounds discovered on exploratory trips from Fleetwood.

ROBINSON Crusoe

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Island.

A 50-TON Devon trawler is back in her home port of Teignmouth after laying on the seabed in 200ft of water off the Cornish coast for eight months.

An amateur team of divers raised her after she had been written off as too costly to salvage.

The 50ft. steel trawler *Girl Rona*, owned and skippered by Reg Matthews of Teignmouth, developed a leak in heavy seas off Dodman Point, South Cornwall, on January 28 (Fishing News, February 4).

Reg Matthews and the crew were rescued, but the craft, which has a replacement value of £150,000 sank in upright position.

Amateur divers of the BSAC began work six weeks ago. They banded together nine of the bags to push up *Girl Rona* 50ft. at a time, so that she could be towed to shallower water by the trawler *Gerryann C*.

Again on Friday prices went over £61 and the trend continued this week when the 841 units landed went for up to £61.30 and a big landing of well over 5,500 units brought in on Tuesday fished even more at the auction, hitting the all time high of £61.80.

Prices first went over the £60 mark last Thursday when the Dutch and Swedish buyers were fighting it out bidding at the local auction.

The herring fishing in the Isle of Man's fishery will end from next Friday, September 30 as the Island's seven-week closed season starts on October 1.

Some of the 4,708 units landed that day fished £61.80 and as each unit held only two boxes, the Continental and Scandinavian buyers

raised his jacket was found —

and inside were the notes, still

in good condition, despite six months on the seabed.

He lost the £20 when *Girl Rona* sank earlier this year.

"We had little time to pick

personal possessions because it all happened so quickly," said Guy.

"I thought I'd seen the last

of £20 in cash which I left in my jacket in the cabin".

But when the trawler was

done on the pipeline for

months in that area, he said,

but oil rigs there had been

shattered during recent bad

weather, and it is possible the debris came from them.

The two incidents this week are the first since a local boat *Waverley*, was chartered by the oil industry last year to cover the areas around the pipelines with a special dredge in an attempt to pick up debris.

She did have some success, but many fishermen believe that there is still a lot of oil related junk on the seabed waiting to be picked up in the nets.

There had been no work

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Continued from Page 14

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